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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

SWITZERLAND FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

How has the Swiss economy succeeded, in less than a century, in passing from a state of under-development to one of prosperity? From a land of famine and poverty, it has grown into one of the five richest countries in the world today. The explanation of this extraordinary phenomenon is given by R. Nordmann and P. Keller in their book "Switzerland, our Adventure" (French and German versions) which has just been published. The authors describe the early days of industrialisation which passed through conditions — standard of living included — identical to those experienced by the developing countries today; they show how the early difficulties were accompanied by considerable political thinking resulting in a system of efficient and modern structures for Switzerland.

The lack of raw materials naturally led industry towards specialisation based on the value added by labour. The quality of Swiss products, which has opened up the markets of the world to them, has saved Switzerland from depending too much on the powers surrounding her. For, devoid of natural riches, Switzerland is forced to open wide her frontiers to the world. Today, more than ever before, she shows her awareness of the interdependence of all her economic and political activities by taking part in the efforts towards European integration and by establishing effective commercial, monetary and world relations.

Worthy of the great tradition of Swiss publishing, enlivened by many anecdotes and richly illustrated, this book provides the answer to all those interested in the phenomenon of Swiss prosperity.

MILLIONS INVESTED IN THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

During the last few years, the Swiss machinery and appliances industry has spent considerable sums on the protection of the environment. From an enquiry, to which some 200 firms belonging to the Swiss Machinery Constructors Association replied, it can be seen that investments on plant for the protection of the environment totalled 96 million francs, with the plant in the process of construction or planned at the time of the enquiry accounting for another 41.5 million francs. The annual cost of running the already existing plant amounts to 31 million francs.

The working of plant designed to prevent pollution of the air, which amounts to 22 million francs a year (45 million francs' worth of investments), is very expensive. The maintenance of

water purifying plant set up by individual firms (41 million francs' worth of investments) comes to 6 million francs a year. Investments on plant designed to prevent noise and vibrations amounts to 10 million francs and the annual running costs to 3 million francs. Even though the technical evolution of installations for the protection of the environment has made tremendous progress during the last few years, big improvements will still have to be made before decontamination and cleaning processes satisfy all requirements. As the latter are often far ahead of present technical possibilities, more and more difficult decisions have to be made in practice. During the modification of already existing plants, in particular, the question often arises whether it would not be wiser to postpone certain investments for a while and to wait for technical solutions better suited to the public interest.

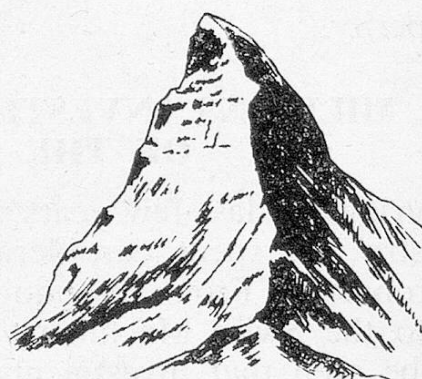
Although the Swiss machinery and metallurgical industries cannot completely discount the risk of accidents, they have already obtained satisfactory results in the protection of the environment; they will continue to devote all their attention to these problems in the future. In particular, they consider some form of international standardisation of the regulations governing the protection of the environment to be absolutely vital, since present practices which differ greatly from one country to the next often result in a sort of discrimination from the point of view of competition.

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